



The One Who Loved

Ryan Miller for October 10, 2010

Both of my parents celebrate their birthdays in the Fall – my Dad’s is in September and my Mom’s is in October. This used to be a stress free time. I could make an ornament with my picture on it in art class or do a craft in elementary school and the gift was always cherished. As I got older I could go to the big book fairs and maybe find some random book for a present or go with the classic World’s Best Mom or Dad coffee mug or t-shirt. I could even rock the coupons for free hugs. When I was young it was so easy. Dad gets a tie and Mom a book or some music and I was golden. Now that I’m an adult my gifts are supposed to be thoughtful and significant and occasionally even expensive. The problem is my parents have their own resources and tend to buy the things they want and need throughout the year. My dad just bought a new TV and recently outfitted the house with blu-ray players. He bought a lot of clothes this summer so his wardrobe is doing pretty well – at least in his opinion he’s looking good. This just doesn’t leave me many options. At this point I try and think of things that my parents might like but wouldn’t buy for themselves – which is a weird category of items. If they really liked them or wanted them they would just buy them – so I buy things that maybe they have a slight interest in – awesome. I try and call my mom or dad leading up to the others birthday in the hopes that they can advise me. I called my mom a few weeks ago to ask about my dad’s birthday. I was hoping she’d have a brilliant idea or something he really needed. Unfortunately, my mom was just as clueless as I was. I decided to buy him the first season of V on Blu-Ray. V is a remake of a series that came out in the 80’s about aliens arriving on earth seeming really wonderful and peaceful but with sinister plans for the human race and our planet in general. This may seem like an odd gift but it is the first TV show I distinctly remember watching with my dad when I was a child. He only watched the first 2 episodes this past spring season so I thought he might enjoy watching it. While it does evoke fond memories of my childhood it definitely falls into the category of items my

dad would have a slight interest in but probably wouldn't buy himself. I feel pretty good about it. Now I have to find something for my mom's birthday in 2 weeks...

One year though I knew I had the perfect present for my mom. It was a print of Rembrandt's famous painting, The Return of the Prodigal Son. I knew it was perfect because it is a beautiful, arresting work of art that my mom cherished and found significant meaning and comfort in...and she told me that's what she wanted. This is the painting. This painting depicts the story we have been exploring together the last two weeks. This painting has impacted people for generations and has moved many to contemplate its beauty and the message it communicates so powerfully about a loving father and the homecoming that God offers to his broken, lost children. This painting so moved Henri Nouwen that he wrote a book called "The Return of the Prodigal Son" about his experience with the artwork and how it unlocked Jesus teaching for him as well as his own heart. He says this about the painting: "Every detail of the father's figure-his facial expression, his posture, the colors of his dress, and, most of all, the still gesture of his hands-speaks of the divine love for humanity that existed from the beginning and ever will be." It was this book that developed my mother's love of Rembrandt's work. Though the father is not in the center of the picture symmetrically there is no doubt that he is the center of the event – the light rings him as he welcomes his lost son back home, holding him with tender hands while the judgmental elder brother looks on. While this is certainly a story about a rebellious son who seeks his own fortune apart from his father's love, as well as a story of the bitter, uptight rule-following elder brother this is also a story of a father who displays a love that the people of the time would have found startling.

The story that inspired Rembrandt's painting is found in Luke 15. Jesus tells the story known as the Parable of the Prodigal Son to a crowd made up of two different groups of people. Here is how the first 2 verses describe the crowd surrounding Jesus.

Luke 15:1-2 explains the situation:

Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So the tax collectors and sinners were gathering to Jesus. This had been happening throughout his entire ministry – the people who didn't conform to the moral laws of the Bible or the rituals and rules of ceremonial purity followed by religious Jews were incredibly attracted to Jesus. The life he lived, the words he spoke, the love he gave drew them to him. These people correspond to the younger brother in the story. They had left home by abandoning the traditional morality of their families and respectable society. They engaged in "wild living." We all know these types of people today. They pursue their own path to enlightenment and spirituality, the path of self-discovery. They disregard custom and convention and pursue life on their own terms free from tradition, prejudice, authority and other barriers to personal freedom. Whether it's drugs, sex, partying, drinking, they pursue their own path to happiness and fulfillment. We all know these people, perhaps some of us are these people – or have been before. Some of us will be them again. These younger brothers are on a path of self-discovery that must be done independently of all influence – especially from the moral, elder

brother types. This is the second group of people that surrounded Jesus. They were the religious leaders and Pharisees who followed the rules and pursued God by practicing different ceremonies and prayer. They correspond to the older son in the story. They were the straight-laced, “good” people who struggled significantly to accept and understand why Jesus, this great, though non-traditional, spiritual teacher would allow the sinners and tax-collectors to gather around him. We know these people too. They often organize to take back the culture from the moral relativists and take an extremely low view of the younger brothers around them. These often pursue God through right living and rule following but are often the reason that the younger brothers don’t ever want to enter church, because the elder brothers there are proud, judgmental and hypocritical. We know these people, some of us are these people.

These religious people are grumbling among themselves about Jesus’ acceptance of the sinners and tax collectors. They were shocked that Jesus was eating with them – which was a cultural sign of acceptance at the time. “Clearly Jesus must not be preaching the whole truth to these people!” “His ministry must be compromised, his spiritual discernment confused and social awareness non-existent.” To this crowd Jesus tells a story that has fascinated audiences for 2000 years. Jesus tells it in response to the grumbling older brothers in the crowd but he strikes notes of welcome to the younger brothers in the audience and unwaveringly focuses on the love of the father. Tim and Brad have focused on each of the sons respectively and today we will take a look at the father and what we can learn about our heavenly father, and about ourselves in the process.

Jesus starts his story saying “There was a man who had two sons.” What is important to know is how much this father loved those two sons. No one in that village had ever seen that kind of love displayed before. He loved those boys with his whole being – he was wise and patient, he was firm and gentle, he was honest, but most of all he was utterly devoted to them. And these boys broke his heart – they both broke his heart – in very different but no less painful ways. Jesus told this story to a crowd of people who had broken God’s heart the sinners and tax collectors who are like the younger brother and the religious, teachers of the law who are like the older brother, and he tells it again to us today.

First there is the younger son. The younger son came to his father and demands his inheritance. This certainly would have shocked Jesus’ 1st century audience and in some ways we can understand the shock of it today. How do you think it would go if you approached your father who is in good health and has many years left to live and said “Dad, I know you are planning on giving me a third of your estate when you die and the truth is, I’m tired of waiting. I’m tired of living under your roof and playing by your rules, I’m ready to be out on my own and to live my own life and I want my inheritance now.” This is not only incredibly disrespectful in our culture in the first century it was like saying: “Father, I wish you were dead.” While the crowd was stunned by the audacity and disrespect of this request they were astonished at the response of the father. Jesus tells us simply in verse 12 “So he divided his property between them.” 1st century Judea was an intensely patriarchal society with extreme importance placed on complex expressions of respect and deference for your elders

and especially your parents. A traditional Middle Eastern father would be expected to respond to such a request by driving the rebellious, disrespectful, poor excuse for a son from his midst and disinheriting him on the spot. But instead he gives him what he asks for. This is very significant for us today. God will give us what we want. If we want life apart from him he will give it to us, no matter how much it pains him because his love does not force us. It woos us, and pursues us and calls to us but does not make us love him. So the father gives the son what he wants. He divides his property among his two sons – 2/3's going to the eldest and 1/3 going to the youngest as was the tradition at the time. At that time a families assets weren't kept in the bank or other places where the father could just make an easy withdrawal, rather it was in land and livestock, it would take significant time for the father to honor his sons request. For most of our families a significant amount of our parents net worth is tied up in houses and cars, retirement funds, maybe stocks and bonds. These aren't things that you can sell overnight and get the money for. It takes time, perhaps a lot of time today for a father to liquidate his assets. But he does it

During that period everyone in the village would have become aware of the situation. It was the subject of all of the conversation – nothing like this had ever happened before. No son had ever treated his father this way and no father has ever responded this way either. It was entirely unprecedented. They had never seen a father love his son like this and most if not all of them believed him to be a fool worthy of little respect to have let his younger son treat him in such a way. But the father sells his land and livestock all the time wondering, hoping that perhaps his son will change his mind, maybe he will come to his senses. But the son doesn't, and Jesus goes on to say, "Not many days after that, the son gathered all he had, and set off for a distant country..." Not only does the father suffer the loss of respect and property but also the pain of rejected love. But he never stops loving his son and instead of distancing himself from the pain or trying to diminish his love for the one who has rejected him as we would do, he accepts the suffering of his son's rejected love.

So the son leaves and squanders all of his inheritance on "wild living." And naturally, as so often happens in life just when things couldn't get any worse they do – a famine hits the country. Today when there is great famine or natural disasters it often hits the news and various relief organizations respond to the need. WorldVision and the Red Cross go to provide relief, nations pitch in and everyday people like you and me head over to lend a hand and give our resources to help those in need like we did with the earthquake in Haiti earlier this year. But that wasn't the case then. When a severe famine hit an area no one outside of the area would know about it – there wasn't any help coming and even if they knew there wasn't a transportation system to get aid to the people who needed it. There was no hope. These sort of natural disasters would mean crime: murder over a loaf of bread, stealing, children sold into slavery, bodies left to rot in the street or even be eaten by people driven to cannibalism. Jesus listeners know the reality of this but even at this point the younger son doesn't choose to go home. He doesn't choose to go home until he is on the brink of death, when he has nothing left to lose. Why does he wait so long? He waits because he knows what his welcome is going to be like when he gets home. In the Jewish culture there was a

ceremony that was performed by the whole community when a member of the community squanders all of his money, leaving his wealth in the hands of Gentiles and has the audacity to try and come home. While a son may never have treated his father like this in this particular village before, this sort of squandering of wealth was not unheard of and the community was prepared to deal with it. Author and speaker John Ortberg describes the ceremony this way:

“As a symbol of how destructive he had been, how he had broken his relationship with that community, broken his family, broken his father, it was a very visual culture, very dramatic gesture... The entire community would gather together. When that boy tried to come home, they would take a pot as a symbol of his life. They would break it before him. This is a way of saying, "This is the brokenness that you have caused in our community. You have broken everything that is good. You have broken trust. You have broken community. Worse, you have broken the heart of your father. Your damage is beyond repair. So let this be a symbol of your brokenness. Let these be the broken pieces of your broken life. You are not whole. You are not welcome. You are not family. You are cut off."

This ceremony was called the kezazah, which is Hebrew for the cutting off. You are kezezah – you are cut off. The son didn't want to return to this – he didn't want to see the brokenness he had caused and he didn't want them to see the brokenness that was in him. Some of us have experienced this kind of brokenness. Some of us have gone to a far off country. We've slept around, we've destroyed our bodies with drugs and alcohol, we have been kicked out and knocked down and done things that would make everyone in this room blush. We have been cut off or feel like we should be. Our shame is so toxic that we can't imagine that anyone could love us, let alone the Father.

But on the brink of death the younger son came to his senses and was willing to brave the reception he knew he would receive because dishonor was better than death. He could no longer be accepted back as a son but perhaps his father would take him on as a servant and at least he would eat and have a wage. So he went home, he sees his village and gets his speech ready and braces himself for the pain he is about to experience but there is one thing he hadn't counted on. At the gate of his family's home stands a heartbroken father, looking out over the horizon every day, hoping beyond hope that his son will come home. On this day, from a far off distance there is a figure walking, stumbling even but the father knows it is his son. He recognizes his sons walk because it is so distinctive. And he knows it's his son.

I remember going to my brother Brad's football games and looking down on the field and being able to pick him out from far away, not by his number but by the way he walked and ran – it was distinctive, everyone's walk is distinctive in one way or another. The way they lift their feet or swing their arms or their posture, it's like a fingerprint, and on that day, from a long way off the father saw his son coming home.

Jesus says, "While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son..." This part of the story is significant both to us and to the listeners of Jesus and some of those sinners there, some of those tax collectors start to cry because Jesus is saying something wonderful about God. God's love is extended to us, his arms are open, he is not withholding his love, he is not waiting for an elaborate ceremony or hoping to punish us but to embrace us and run to us and forgive us, the only thing that blocks God's love is when we turn away from it.

When the father saw his son he ran. This term used by Luke here is a technical term that normally is reserved for athletic contests – the father raced to his son, he sprinted – all of his aching bones and muscles were coursing with adrenaline to reach his son. Now distinguished Middle Eastern patriarchs do not run. Children could run, women could run, young men might run, but a father, the head of the household did not. He would not pick up his robes, bare his legs and run like some boy. It was undignified, strong in control men don't run, they didn't show their naked legs in public, it was shameful, it was humiliating. No father would run. But this father raced to his son.

Why does he race? He has longed for this moment, he has ached for his son to come home but also he knows that he has to reach his son first. He knows that if the village reaches him first it will mean kezazah – they will break the pot and cut him off – it will mean brokenness and shame and humiliation that might just do his son in. It might be the end of this broken boy and the chance at the reconciliation he has been longing for. The father has already lost his son once, he doesn't want to lose him again. Brokenness will not have the last word in this story, not for his son, so the father runs. He picks up his robes and bares his legs and all of the shame and humiliation that should have fallen on the son are born by the father instead. The father never stopped loving that boy, no matter how far he was from home. The boy never stopped needing his father, no matter how far he ran away. This is not the parable of the prodigal son or the parable of the resentful older brother, this is the parable of the father who runs. No matter what distant country you have been in, no matter, how long you have been away, no matter what you have done or how you have squandered your inheritance, the moment you turn around and take one step towards God, He picks up his robes, he bares his legs, he takes all the shame that should be yours and he sprints to you. This is what God does in Jesus – Jesus is God running to His rebellious child, to me and to you.

When he reaches his boy the son starts his speech about earning his way back into the father's good graces – how he will make restitution and work for his keep but the father embraces him and cuts him off in the best possible way. And the father shows his love for his son in his embrace and in his words. He says to his servants: ^{22b} 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'

The boy who had turned his back on his father, who had wished him dead, who had squandered his inheritance among the Gentiles and had come crawling back on the brink of death, dirty and broken,

disheveled and in need of a bath, the father clothes him in the clothing of an heir. Henri Nouwen says it this way: “The Father dresses his son with the signs of freedom, the freedom of the children of God. He does not want any of them to be hired servants or slaves. He wants them to wear the robe of honor, the ring of inheritance, and the footwear of prestige...” This is what the father wants to dress us in when we turn to Him – the clothing of an heir, of a cherished son or daughter whose wrongs and rebellion is forgiven at great cost to the Father but at little cost to me. This is the amazing grace of God.

The father has his servants kill the fattened calf – this is going to be the party of the year. At the time most meals did not include meat – it was an extravagance. This sort of celebration was an extremely rare occurrence and generally the whole village is invited. There would be music and dancing, eating and drinking, a huge celebration for the restoration of the younger son.

All of us, at one time or another, have been the younger son. We have gone off to the distant country; we have turned our back on our Heavenly Father and chosen our own way. Some of us are still younger sons. The beauty of this story is that we can come home. Our Father wants to pull us back from the pain and brokenness we experience, to hold us close so that we never get hurt but his love is too great for that – his love offers the freedom to reject that love and to love in return. This is part of the great pain of love and the great pain of God. God has chosen to be a Father and he wants his children to be free. That freedom includes the possibility that we will leave home and squander everything. God knows the pain that will come from that choice but he offers a love that can only be freely received and cannot be forced or coerced. Our Father wants to welcome us home and embrace us and realize that the love we have searched for elsewhere can only be found in him. And if we chose to come home there is a celebration.

So father, son and the whole village, they began to celebrate. And this is where the story takes another turn, because this isn't the story of a man with just one son, it is the story of a man who had two sons. When the older brother returns home from working in the fields and hears the music and dancing he is confused and hurt so he asks one of the servants what's going on.

The servant tells him in Luke 15:27:

'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

At hearing this it is the older sons turn to disgrace his father. By tradition it is the older son's role at huge social event to serve the honored guests and display his father's generosity to others. This son though not only refuses that role (how could he serve his good for nothing brother?) but refuses to come in entirely. This party was probably the largest social event the father has ever held, and by remaining on the outside the son makes it abundantly clear what he thinks about his father's actions. This is an incredibly offensive public protest by the son who was viewed by many as the “good son”. In the face of this disrespect the father does not cast his son out or punish him, rather he goes out to

him and pleads with him. Through the father was so full of joy at his younger sons return he couldn't wait to celebrate he had not forgotten his older son. As soon as he hears his son is outside he goes out to him. Much as the father bears the shame of the younger son by lifting his robe running to him when he sees him down the road, he bears the shame of the older son by going out from the feast to invite his older son to join the party.

In response to the father's pleading the older son continues his disrespect. Instead of addressing his father with the elaborate deference due an elder in that culture the son says "Look!" as in "Look you crazy old man – listen to what I have to say to you!" In public he continues to humiliate his father. Why is the older son so angry that he would openly rebuke his father? There are many reasons but one of the main ones was the cost of everything that is happening. The son says:

"Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends." (Luke 15:29b)

His wayward brother though gets the fattened calf! This is merely symbolic of the bigger issue, by the father accepting the son back into the family he has made him an heir to the father again, with a claim to one-third of their now diminished holdings. This is unfathomable to the older brother. He rightly sees that the father's forgiveness is costing him a huge amount. He has spent his whole life working for the father, slaving as he calls it, so that he can get what he deserves from him and as soon as his rebellious brother returns he loses not only his temper but also 1/3 of his inheritance. He can't believe his father has done this let alone overlooked consulting him about it. The remaining wealth is his by right! What is the father doing?

This is how many people feel who have done their best to follow moral laws and obey God's commands. They have pursued the path of moral conformity and expect that their service to God and good works will be rewarded because that's how the world works – isn't it? When I perform well I am affirmed. When I treat people well they like me, when I do what is right I am respected, all of my good works have good consequences which is why grace is so hard for us to grasp. The idea that the father loves the younger, rebellious son who is clearly living a life opposed to God's rule is terribly confusing. He didn't do anything that deserves love and that's just the thing with the love of the father: it is given freely, without having to earn it. God loves you completely, no matter what you do. There is nothing you can do to make God love you more and there is nothing you can go to make God love you less. The love is constant and complete. The problem is elder brothers don't serve the father for the joy of doing what is right or to rest in the relationship with him, they do it to get what they want: a good life, respect, care from others, acceptance into a community and ultimately control. The elder brother is unable to handle hardship or suffering because his path is results oriented and he believes his right action should always end in good results. Far too often we are the older brother who believes that we deserve to be rewarded for what we do for God. We subtly begin to see ourselves as superior to others who don't meet our high moral standards and our constant comparison is often where we base our self-worth.

The truth is the older son is losing the father's love not because he has done the wrong things but because he has done the right ones for the wrong reasons. The older son says I "never disobeyed your orders" but it is this pride in his moral choices, his confidence in his own ability to save himself that is the issue. The younger son wanted to throw off his father's supervision and enjoy the family's assets without any responsibility or relationship. He wanted to make his own decisions on his own terms and did so with amazing rebellion. The older son wanted the same thing but he went about it in a different way. He too wanted the father's wealth instead of the joy and love of the father himself. His obedience was about achieving this end. Neither son loved the father for himself and Jesus makes it clear that we can rebel against God by either breaking his rules or by keeping them diligently with the wrong heart. If you, like the elder brother, believe that God ought to bless you, answer your prayers and give you a good life because of all that you have done for him then Jesus may be your helper, example, even inspiration but he is not your Savior. You are your own Savior. Sin is not just breaking the rules, it is putting yourself in the place of God as Savior, Lord and Judge just as each son sought to displace his father in this own life.

In the face of this truth the Father continues to respond to his son with amazing tenderness. Instead of punishment or anger he says:

'My son...you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' (Luke 15:31-32)

Jesus ends the story abruptly, leaving the older brother in his alienated state with a choice. This is a totally reversal of how the Pharisees viewed the world. The "bad" son by their standards finds redemption but the "good" son is left out in the cold with his judgment, superiority and anger. Just as all of us who are younger brothers are assured of our reception when we come home to the father, all of us who are older brothers are invited to come in and join the celebration. We are invited to lay down our life or moral conformity that is about control and saving ourselves and begin to embrace the joy of the father where our right actions are motivated by love of people, love of what is right and love of pleasing the father. Both the younger son and the older son are alienated from the father just in very different ways.

What is important to know about this father is how much he loved those two boys and even when their hearts were far away from him he still longed for them to come back home.

The word prodigal doesn't mean wayward or rebellious or sinful. Prodigal means recklessly extravagant. In this way it is not just the younger son who is a prodigal but the father as well. The father's welcome of his younger son was literally reckless because he did not reckon the son's sins against him or demand repayment. He is the lovesick father, he is the extravagant lover, and his grace to both the younger son and the older one give us all hope that we can truly come home.

But if we end here we miss one final important point. In some ways if we ask ourselves am I like the younger or older son and in what ways to I need to come home we forget to ask an even more important question: Am I interested in becoming like the father. Whether you are the younger son or older one you are invited to become the heir to the father. All of us no matter where we are, are invited to come home and become like the father. Everyone who becomes a father or mother has been a son or daughter but every son or daughter has to choose to leave childhood behind and become a father or mother for others. We can become people who are not only welcomed home or invited to join the celebration but to do that for others, to give others the love and grace and compassion of God. This is the call to follow Jesus. Jesus tells us to

“Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate.” (Luke 6:36)

This isn't just a comforting statement about his love and compassion for us but an invitation to become like God and give his love away to others. The return to the father is incomplete if we fail to embrace our position as heirs.

No matter which character you identify with in Jesus story both sons are heirs to the father and this is what we are called to be. Perhaps you don't identify with either son , then I extend to you the same invitation that Jesus does. He calls us to follow him and in doing so become like our father in heaven. A father who the son reveals to us in amazing detail. Jesus is the true Son of the Father and our model for becoming like him. Jesus shows us God in human form and his love for both the rebellious children in the world and the rule followers is calling all of us to come home.

Maybe you have lived a life of self discovery. You've left home and made selfish choices, that have created great brokenness in yourself and in others. You have lied and cheated and committed crimes. You've been through an ugly divorce, you've had an abortion, you have lived a life that you know is empty. You can come home.

God doesn't force you to come home, you can stay in that far off country. If you don't want God he doesn't force himself on you. He will give you the freedom you desire, a life lived apart from him but what looks like freedom often ends up being what imprisons us. Maybe you have been at church for a long time but have lived a secret life, a hidden life that's just overwhelming you. You feel trapped and you want others to think well of you so no one knows who you really are. You don't have to keep pretending, you can come home. Maybe you're kind of like that older brother, and on the outside, things look okay. But the truth is, in your heart, there is just all this anger, pride, resentment, and coldness toward God. You can come home. Maybe when people look at you they see someone who is kind and respectful – someone they think well of. But you know, you need to come in and join the celebration. Today, you can come home.

So many people think they have to clean up and get right before they come home to God and nothing could be further from the truth. You don't have to do anything other than to come home by

the grace of the Father because He is the God who runs, he is the God who loves, he is the God who invites us to join the celebration.

To a crowd of people who both have broken the father's heart by either rebellion or moralistic conformity Jesus tells us a story about a father. And if we start with the father he tells us about and think of one a hundred times better, a thousand times wiser, a million times more love than you start to get just a small echo of how good and wise and loving God is. He is the Father you invites you to come home. And you can come home today. A good way to start is the way this boy started. Just to say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against You. I'm so tired of carrying around my shame. I'm so tired of trying to pretend to everybody that it's okay. Will You forgive me through Jesus? Will You wash away my sin and heal my brokenness, make me Your son or your daughter?"

And what is so incredible about God is that Jesus tells us when we come home, when we trust in Jesus for our forgiveness and embrace the love of the father, Jesus says that to people who come home

"My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home in them." (John 14:23)

God's home will be in us. Our longing for a place, for the men and women we know we could be but aren't, the hunger for forgiveness and love and for our brokenness to be put back together again is our hunger for God. He will make his home in us and we will never be alone – wherever we go, there is the home of God, there is an heir to the Father. That's what he promises. You can come home.

The Father gives us what we want. If we want life apart from him we can have it but he never stops loving us and pursuing us and hoping we will come home. He is looking into the distance for us and the moment he sees us he picks up his robes, bearing his legs and he runs to us. He embraces us, he celebrates us, and for some of us he comes out to us, challenges us in our pride and superiority and judgment and invites us to join the party that we are resisting. The Father has welcomed us home, he has invited us in and we are truly the heirs of the Father because of the sacrifice of Jesus.

You can come home - you can join the celebration – you can become like the Father

Let's Pray